

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for providing enhanced online shopping experiences to online shoppers for automatic association of two or more online shoppers, said  
5 method comprising the steps of:  
searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of  
search criteria;  
notifying a first online shopper that at least one concurrently online shopper  
meets said search criteria; and  
10 automatically associating said first online shopper with said one or more  
concurrently online shoppers.
2. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of notifying a first online  
shopper comprises providing a buddy position indicator on a graphical map of  
an online shopping mall.
- 15 3. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of searching a list of  
concurrently online shoppers according to a set of search criteria comprises  
searching by an online shopper name criteria.
4. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of searching a list of  
concurrently online shoppers according to a set of search criteria comprises  
20 searching by an online shopper position criteria.

5. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of search criteria comprises searching by an online shopper interest term criteria.
6. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of searching a list of  
5 concurrently online shoppers according to a set of search criteria comprises searching by an online shopper position proximity criteria.
7. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of automatically associating said first online shopper with said one or more concurrently online shoppers comprises setting position coordinates for both  
10 shoppers to equivalent values.
8. The method as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said step of automatically associating said first online shopper with said one or more concurrently online shoppers comprises establishing a communications session between said online shoppers.
- 15 9. The method as set forth in Claim 8 wherein said step of establishing a communications session between said online shoppers further comprises making a record of said communications session.
10. A computer readable medium encoded with software for providing enhanced online shopping experiences to online shoppers for automatic association of  
20 two or more online shoppers, said software when executed by an online shopping computer system causing computer system to perform the following actions:  
  
search a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of

search criteria;

notify a first online shopper that at least one concurrently online shopper  
meets said search criteria; and

automatically associate said first online shopper with said one or more

5 concurrently online shoppers.

11. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software  
for notifying a first online shopper comprises software for providing a buddy  
position indicator on a graphical map of an online shopping mall.

12. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software  
10 for searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of  
search criteria comprises software for searching by an online shopper name  
criteria.

13. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software  
for searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of  
15 search criteria comprises software for searching by an online shopper position  
criteria.

14. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software  
for searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of  
search criteria comprises software for searching by an online shopper interest  
20 term criteria.

15. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software  
for searching a list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of

search criteria comprises software for searching by an online shopper position proximity criteria.

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16. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software for automatically associating said first online shopper with said one or more concurrently online shoppers comprises software for setting position coordinates for both shoppers to equivalent values.
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17. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said software for automatically associating said first online shopper with said one or more concurrently online shoppers comprises software for establishing a communications session between said online shoppers.
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18. The computer readable medium as set forth in Claim 17 wherein said software for establishing a communications session between said online shoppers further comprises software for making a record of said communications session.
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19. A system for providing enhanced online shopping experiences to online shoppers for automatic association of two or more online shoppers, said system comprising:
- a master list of concurrently online shoppers
  - a buddy list searching facility adapted to search said master list of concurrently online shoppers according to a set of search criteria;
  - an online shopper notifier for notifying a first online shopper that at least one concurrently online shopper meets said search criteria; and
  - a shopper associator adapted to automatically associating said first online

shopper with said one or more concurrently online shoppers.

20. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said notifier comprises a buddy position indicator on a graphical map of an online shopping mall.
21. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said searching facility is adapted to search by an online shopper name criteria.
22. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said searching facility is adapted to search by an online shopper position criteria.
23. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said search facility is adapted to search by an online shopper interest term criteria.
24. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said search facility is adapted to search by an online shopper position proximity criteria.
25. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said associator is adapted to set position coordinates for two or more shoppers to equivalent values.
26. The system as set forth in Claim 19 wherein said associator is adapted to establish a communications session between two or more online shoppers.
27. The system as set forth in Claim 26 wherein said associator for establishing a communications session between online shoppers further comprises a communications recorder making a record of said communications session.